FERTILITY AWARENESS METHOD

I. Definition

- A. Fertility Awareness Method is another name for periodic abstinence or Natural Family Planning, which is an accepted method of birth control.
- B. There are four basic types of Fertility Awareness
 - 1. Basal body temperature

Method based on using BBT alone to limit unprotected intercourse to the postovulatory infertile time.

2. Ovulation, mucous or Billings method

Method based on evaluating the cervical mucus changes signifying ovulation. Unprotected intercourse would be limited to the postovulatory infertile times. In a long cycle there may be a few safe days following menses and before the first sign of changes in the mucus.

3. Calendar rhythm method

Method based on predicting ovulation using the client's menstrual history.

4. The sympto-thermal method:

Combines all three of the above, allowing a woman to be more accurate in predicting her safe days than if she used any one method alone.

II. Effectiveness

- A. According to Contraceptive Technology, Eighteenth Revised Edition, Fertility Awareness Method is, theoretically, 80-98% effective, depending on the method and/or methods used. Perfect users of BBT are quoted a first year probability of pregnancy of 2%; typical users have a 20% probability of pregnancy.
- B. Some studies have indicated that couples that have learned the method together achieve the higher level of effectiveness as they are both resolved to use it.

III. Patient education

- A. Patients should be screened to determine likelihood of success for this method. Some factors to consider are whether the method will be used:
 - 1. By the couple
 - 2. By a single individual with one other partner
 - 3. By a single individual with more than one partner
 - 4. Out of religious conviction or some other reason.
- B. Couples desiring to use the method out of religious conviction should be referred to local teachers able to provide the religious component. In no case should clinic staff attempt to provide religion-based education.

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- C. While all temporary methods of birth control require integration into the client's lifestyle and social and sexual practices, Fertility Awareness Method requires additional attention.
 - 1. This is particularly true for the woman who is using the Fertility Awareness Method with partner(s) who have little or no education in, understanding of, or commitment to this method.
 - 2. This woman then must take full responsibility for ensuring the sometimes lengthy periods of abstinence and must understand her need to control social situations (shift work, alcohol use, and attention to schedules and details) in the use of Fertility Awareness Method.

IV. Referrals

- A. Group or one-to-one instruction is strongly recommended to all clients interested in this method.
- B. Each clinic should develop its own referrals for Fertility Awareness Method since this varies from community to community.

V. Documentation

Couple or single partner use of Fertility Awareness Method should be documented in the client's chart together with the plan for use.